

A Summary of Certain Website Evaluation Techniques

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Abstract

This paper summarizes content from two published articles on the subject of website evaluation, and some different criterion used when evaluating a certain website. The articles discuss different techniques and how to apply them. Wescott (2008) discusses four tools for website evaluation, while Schrock (2002) gives explanations for 26 criteria. This paper examines some of these techniques in an effort to learn how to better evaluate an internet website.

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Several criterions have been developed in an effort to help students and teachers to critically evaluate certain websites for their accuracy and dependability. Teachers need to be able to depend on the authenticity of websites which they recommend to their students. Likewise, students should be able to properly evaluate websites which they visit while attempting to obtain information pertinent to their assigned class work. This paper examines some of Westcott's (2008) and Schrock's (2002) recommendations for evaluation of website content.

An important criterion to evaluate is a website's bias. Both authors noted above state that it is very important to steer away from sites that make an effort to persuade rather than provide information. Schrock (2002) states that one should make an attempt to know who or what organization is sponsoring the page. Westcott (2008) informs us that www.google.com has a "link to" feature which will provide a list of sites having a link to your particular website of interest. Schrock (2002) provides a good question to ask yourself when evaluating a website for bias: "Is the page actually an ad disguised as information?"

Some websites attempt to present misinformation. In other words, some sites intentionally present false information. Both of our authors agree that one should find out who authored the website in question. Schrock (2002) states that nothing can stop the website author from providing any type of information. Westcott (2008) relays to us that www.whois.net allows persons to find out who is responsible for a certain website. Westcott (2008) believes that the first thing students should do is "to look for an author" and furthermore that one should "be suspicious of a website which does not include the author."

Schrock (2002) states that credible websites always include the date at which the last update occurred. The author also shares that it may also be important to know the date the information was collected. Students should be expected to know if the information they are researching demands a more current form.

It is important to look closely at a ⁽¹⁾websites address. If it contains a tilde (~), Westcott (2008) says to then proceed with caution. The author informs us that the tilde indicates that particular portion of the website was “created, published, and maintained” by someone other than the sponsoring organization. The tilde indicates that the sponsoring organization may not endorse the presented material.

When we look at a website in an effort to gain knowledge or information, we generally want to know on what authority the author is basing his or her information. Schrock (2002) states that there are certain questions one should ask when determining the authority of the website: 1) Is the author’s name highly-regarded or a name that you recognize? 2) Does the site contain a biography of the author and the author’s e-mail address or contact information? 3) Did you find this site by linking to it through another website that you already trust? and 4) Are you being led to further information concerning the author?

Westcott (2008) states that it is also important to get a second opinion. Since the internet is growing constantly, it is not too difficult to find information from another source. If you feel that the website you are investigating could be suspicious, Westcott (2008) implores us to find another site. You could also easily get another person to help evaluate the website in question. This could be a big help in the process.

Both of our authors remind us that students will be better equipped, and more digitally literate adults if they are better equipped to properly handle the internet. As more and more

information is produced online, it is more and more crucial that students be better educated in critical website evaluation. It has become very important for teachers to instruct students on how to properly evaluate a website. After all, today's students will be creating tomorrow's websites.

*Very
true!!*

References

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